

# Some American Singers in Paris

Geraldine Farrar and Miss Lindsay, the latter at the Opera for Three Years, Conspicuous Successes—Marguerita Sylva, the Opera Comique Prima Donna. Lucille Marcell, Will Sing at the Opera Next Year.

By DEXTER MARSHALL.

Paris, Sept. 19.—"You can count the American girls who have sung successfully in opera here upon the fingers of your two hands, and have fingers to spare," said an enthusiastic operagoer to the writer to-day.

"Yet American aspirants for operatic honors continue to come to Paris, a seemingly endless but ever hopeful procession, each of whose members knows well enough that 99 per cent of the stardom are doomed to failure, but believes herself to be the 1 per cent upon whom fortune may be compelled to smile. I cannot understand it at all."

This man's point of view, say the students of singing and their friends in Paris, is too pessimistic. Then they make out a list of the American women singers who have won recognition in the French capital, but, at the best, the showing is very startling. Emma Eames always is placed at the head of the list, of course; she is a great and shining star, by whose light her aspiring sisters seek the path to fame and fortune. After Eames comes the late Sybil Sanderson, whose success here was much greater than Eames', but whose temper was too "artistic," not to say erratic, and whose operatic career lasted only a few years. Emma Nevada is sometimes mentioned, but she doesn't belong, really, since she failed in Paris, although successful elsewhere.

Oliver Fremsted's European success, almost as great in Germany as in New York, did not include Parisian career; but Geraldine Farrar and Miss Lindsay both received Parisian training and both have sung successfully here. The latter, indeed, has been a drawing card at the opera for the past three years. She is of Scotch blood, although known as an American, where, it is understood, she was born, but she has lived here ever since she was a little girl. Marie Van Zandt, who also was trained here, was highly successful for a time, but her career was stopped suddenly by an outburst of her own temper. Something happened one evening when she was on the stage which so exasperated her that she expressed her opinion about a lot of things in words more direct than polite. Mary Garden, opera comique prima donna for several seasons, came here from New York, where she was taken when only nine years old, and so is spoken of frequently as American, although really she is of Scotch birth.

Lillian Nordica won a great success here and is in great favor with the Parisian opera public, as well as the American contingent, but her European training was received in Milan and her debut was made there, and not here, as Eames' was. Pauline Donaudy is a French-Canadian, and not an American, from the States. Besides, she never has sung here, although she has been highly successful in other places on the European side of the water, particularly in Nice and London. Eames herself is a native of Shanghai, although her father and mother were both Americans. Mme. Cisneros, who was Eleanor Broadfoot, of New York, and the daughter of a civil war veteran, studied at Milan and won the reputation of a high-grade singer in that city, and in Vienna, before going to New York. She has also sung in London with success.

Marguerita Sylva, now and for two or three years a prima donna at the Opera Comique, who, off the stage, is Mrs. William D. Mann, and whose husband was at one time manager of the Herald Square Theater, New York, is of European birth, although often called an American. Jane Norla, a prima donna at the Opera House, and who has sung Juliet there with a success as Romeo is from St. Louis, where she was born and christened Josephine. Blanche Hamilton Fox, of Boston, whose stage name is Bianca Volpini, is carving out for herself a successful musical career in Italy, but has been attacked Paris as yet. She is the daughter of Mr. Albert Fox, well known in half the big cities of the States. Miss Lucille Marcell, a New York girl, who sings under the name of Lucille Marcell, will make her debut on the opera stage next year after a long and severe probation here. She is a protégée of Jean de Reszke, who expects to be made director of the singers at the opera, and it is understood that she will see that she has a contract after the next director of the Opera assumes his place next January. She has been in Europe five years, one of which she spent in Berlin and four here. She sang at the Opera Comique one season, and so will not be unknown to the Paris music-loving public when she makes her debut in the "Huguenots" early next year. She expects to sing, also, in "Lohengrin" as Elisabeth, and in "The Valkyrie" as Grunelda.

Emma d'Egremont, who was Miss Emma Estelle Potts, of the Berkshire Hills, and now is Mrs. H. E. Twining, the wife of a representative Anglo-American business man, sometimes resident on one side of the ocean and sometimes on the other, won an engagement at the Opera House some years ago, but never was allowed to sing upon its stage, a fate which has befallen more than one American girl after she had devoted years of time and effort and thousands of dollars to Parisian training.

Miss d'Egremont's case was not of that sort exactly, however. Ten or twelve years ago she was the soprano of the Church of the Heavenly Host in New York. One summer she decided to take a vacation in Germany. After visiting two or three Teutonic musical centers she came to Paris. Here Guilmette, the famous organist, heard her sing, and was pleased. He insisted on her singing before the director of the Opera, and he gave her a contract after one hearing, with the proviso that she should learn the French language to his satisfaction before making her debut. For some reason she never fulfilled this condition, and so never has sung at the Paris Opera, although she has sung much and successfully in public, both in France and in England.

**French and American Training.** It isn't a new story that far too many American dollars are expended upon the Parisian singing teachers, but it can do no harm to quote Marguerita Sylva upon that point:

"There are as good teachers of the voice in New York, Boston, Philadelphia, Washington, and other American cities," she says, "as there are in Paris, and no American girl should think of coming here until she has gone as far as she can at home, and that is a long way. In each of the cities I have named she can learn the various tone-making arts perfectly, and be in God's own country all the while."

"After she has done that, however; after she has tested her voice before the public and found that she can please her audience; after she is certain that she has an open 'call,' then, and not until then, she may come here with good results, because here, and here alone, she can acquire the accent necessary to

a Parisian success, which is essential before the singer can be received properly in the United States.

"Here, too, that curious thing called 'atmosphere' exists. It is indispensable to the highest progress, but it doesn't exist in American cities to any such extent as it does here, and never will so long as so many of the first-grade American teachers pack up and come to Paris directly they gain a reputation. 'Atmosphere' is made up of many elements. One of them is a really serious regard for music, such as the Parisians have in some degree, but which is still largely undeveloped in the United States, although it is growing there. Another element is furnished by the large number of people who devote themselves to music here. This makes it easy for singers to meet and compare notes—no pun intended—although I do mean the liberal comparison of musical notes and tones, as well as talking things over generally. For example, I meet another singer, and we discuss tone production:

"How do you do this? I ask, giving an example of the tone I mean. 'I do it so and so.'"

"Oh," my friend may reply, "I do it this way," showing vocally what she means. Perhaps she may adopt my way, perhaps I may adopt hers; perhaps neither, or we may change. But at all events we exchange our views and often we learn from each other in that way."

"But whether here or in America, we all have to work daily if we are to hold

our place in the Parisian opera world. For this she must be ready at any and all times to sing any part she may know. It is from the ranks of these new Conservatoire graduates that the understudies are drawn, and, of course, the training they receive while doing that sort of work is sufficiently useful to them to make up in some degree for their small pay. If a singer scores a big hit, however, the contract is thrown away at once and a new one is made, by the terms of which the singer gets her pay, say from 600 francs, or \$24, a month up to 1,000 francs, or \$40, a month. The costumes are furnished by the management, of course. In fact, everything, from shoes and stockings and hairpins to gowns, is paid for by the management, except the point which the singers put on their faces. Why that is not included no one seems to know.

Only a few rise to the financial height of \$120 a month, however, while many do not survive beyond the first year. The latter are out of it musically thereafter, as a matter of course, but those who stand the rigors of the three years, even if they sing few first-class roles, are musically established for life.

Both the Grand Opera House and the Opera Comique, like the Comedie Francaise and Odéon theaters, are government establishments, partially supported by the public purse, under the ministry of instruction, and the singer or actor who can hold a place in one of these public institutions of amusement for a term of years is certain of an engagement as a finished artist anywhere else in France. The prime favorites on the opera stage in Paris sometimes receive from \$8,000 to \$10,000 a year—\$32,000 to \$40,000.

**Getting onto the Opera Stage.**

There is one infallible course for the student in singing who wishes to get on to the operatic stage in Paris to pursue. That is to enter the Conservatoire and win a first prize. Every first prize winner must receive an appointment to sing either at the Opera House or at the Opera Comique.

But this is much easier said than done. In fact, it is declared to be practically impossible for an American girl to get a chance to study at the Conservatoire at all, since, necessarily, the number of students must be limited, and there are plenty of French girls ready to fill all the

vacancies. Then, according to some disappointed Americans, there is more or less discrimination against students from the United States. This is denied by the French, of course, but at all events, very few Americans have ever had a chance to try to win a Conservatoire prize. Its winning and the operatic engagement that must ensue do not always insure a successful musical career at that. In fact, not half the students who fight their way through the Conservatoire to a debut are able to attain great eminence as singers.

The engagement is compulsory for one year on both sides. The singer must res-

tain three years if asked to do so, but may be released by the management at the end of twelve months, or again at the end of two years. Friends of those who do not succeed in sticking out the three years say that there is a lot of favoritism, and that often the more capable singers are turned away because less capable singers who please the management better are jealous of any one's success but their own. How true this is I cannot say; it is true, however, that some Parisians believe it.

After the student has won a first prize for singing she has an opportunity to try for a first prize in acting. If she wins it as well as the prize for singing, she has her choice of joining either the Opera or the Opera Comique. Within a year after the contract is signed she is entitled to a debut, at which she sings some big part, such as Juliet in "Romeo and Juliette," Marguerite in "Faust," or the title role in "Carmen." She must be allowed to sing this part three times, but after that, in most cases, she sings minor parts only for the next three years, at the magnificent salary of 300 francs a month. Translated into Uncle Sam's currency that is only \$90, or \$720 a year.



Lucille Marcell, who sings in opera next year.

largely because, while many operas are sung in Italian in the United States, very few are sung there in French. "There are three considerable operatic seasons in the Italian cities, the Carnival, lasting six weeks in December and January; the Easter season, and the spring season. Then there is a lesser season in August and September.

"More singers make Milan their headquarters than any other Italian city, although not a few rendezvous at Florence, Rome, and other centers. Just before the beginning of each season the local impresarios make genuine pilgrimages to the musical centers in search of singers. Having decided upon the operas they intend to give, the impresarios seek performers to fill the various roles involved, offering all the way from 200 to 300 francs (\$80 to \$90) for the season's work; prices which certainly are not extravagant from the American point of view.

"The star singers at La Scala in Milan, the largest theater in the world, are better paid, of course; magnificently paid for Italy. Signora Krusenstjerna, the Russian prima donna, who sang 'Salome' there last year, receives a salary of 60,000 francs, or \$2,400, a year, and Signora Matalba, the star male singer at La Scala, gets as much. But I know a basso profundo, a very capable one, too, who has been on the stage twenty years and is counted successful, whose annual earnings are not more than \$400, and there are many like him.

"The various operatic seasons in the smaller Italian cities are relatively profitable, generally, since, while there is none too much money in Italy, literally almost everybody, from the poorly paid work-

man up, hears the opera more or less frequently each season. And, so anxious are some of the pupils of singing to make the longed-for debut that not infrequently they scrape up a few extra francs to pay for the privilege of singing a more or less important role in public.

"This costs whatever the impresario has the nerve to charge and the singer the willingness and the ability to pay. I have heard of debuts that have cost the singer \$10, and of others for which the singer has paid \$1,000. It would be a bold impresario who should allow a positively bad singer to make a debut upon his stage, however. His public would resent it bitterly and his returns probably would suffer much more than he would profit by the fee paid by the singer."

**What It Costs to Study Singing.**

It costs considerably less to study singing in Italy than in Paris. With economy \$2,000, possibly less, can be made to cover a year's living and lessons in Italy. It will cost at least \$1,000 a year more in Paris. No young American woman should live alone either in Paris or any Italian city, for obvious reasons—although many of them do so—and to the expense given above a liberal addition should be made for the living of the girl's mother or some woman of her own kind during the period she is a pupil of singing anywhere in Europe.

It costs about as much to study singing in Berlin as it does in Paris, but rather less both at Leipzig, the second musical center in Germany, and at Dresden, which comes next. Marian Craft, the Californian prima donna, studied in Germany and is singing this year with great success at the Royal Opera House in Mayence. Her Traviata is described as an extraordinarily good performance. Geraldine Farrar did as much studying in Germany as in Paris, and Marian Weed, who made a genuine success in Germany before joining the Metropolitan in New York, studied at Dresden.

The widespread love of music in Germany, Italy, and in France furnishes one of the reasons why so many American girls study singing 'abroad.' Every city of any size has its opera house, and since most of them cannot afford to pay

for singers of experience, and great rep-

resentation, they are often glad to accept those of lesser grade. Thus there are manifold more chances in each of the three countries than in her own for the young, inexperienced American singer to appear publicly—to 'find herself'—in opera before audiences that are not too critical, while yet she is preparing for her first attempt upon a metropolitan opera stage.

**Success in Paris.**

Not a few American singers who have made reputations here have done so after winning fame elsewhere, while almost no American girls have graduated to the operatic stage direct from their Paris teachers' establishments. Lucille Marcell and Jane Norla are exceptions, although the latter was a favorite member of the Castle Square Opera Company and had studied for years in New York before coming to Paris.

On arriving here she found that the man under whom she had studied in New York had established himself as a teacher here, and again became his pupil. He had been made 'directeur de la scène' at the opera, and so had the privilege of training his private pupils in what is known as the Petit Theater at the Opera House. It is rather a big apartment, say seventy-five feet by fifty in size, all but a small part of its floor sloping at the regular stage angle, and with a very high ceiling. At the rear there is an elevated, glass-enclosed passage, or gallery, which serves as a place between two 'offices of administration of the opera.' The director of the opera passed through this gallery one day when Miss Norla was 'doing' her exercises, and he was so impressed with her voice and phrasing that he asked for her name and some information as to what she had done. The result was her engagement, which lasted two years, during which she sang several important roles, including 'Lohengrin' and 'Nedda' in 'I Pagliacci.' She was slated to sing Elizabeth in 'Tannhauser,' but for some reason did not do so. She expects to sign a contract with the new management of the opera.

Marguerita Sylva's engagement by the Opera Comique was a simpler matter even than Jane Norla's. Although not an English girl, she made a contract at nineteen to sing for Sir Augustus Harris in London at Covent Garden and Drury Lane. Twenty days later she had sailed, and she went to the States with Beecham Tree as a member of his dramatic company some ten or a dozen years ago. True, he thought he could make an emotional actress of her, but her accent was against her, and at first she had to be content with doing the musical numbers in such diverse plays as 'Hamlet' and 'Trilby.' Later she became a comic opera star, and remained in America until she was married to Francis Wilson when he revived 'Carmen.' She expects to return to America by and by, but not for a year or two at least. 'Carmen' has been one of her favorite parts at the Opera Comique, Santuzzo in 'Cavalleria Rusticana' another.

**Possible About Teachers.**

Several of the teachers who were famous ten or a dozen years ago are now dead and gone, while some of those who survive are well along in years. Vanucci is seventy. Mme. Marchesi is eighty past, Shriella is between eighty and ninety. But they are all still teaching many pupils.

Their prices when at their best were more reasonable than the prices now exacted by some of the New York teachers who have transferred their activities from the American metropolis, with its alleged lack of 'atmosphere,' to the French metropolis, which is full of it.

Jean de Reszke, who is so big a man in the musical world that he cannot well be advertised, asks and gets \$40 an hour, but he will teach four pupils for that price all together as readily as one, providing the progress, their voices, and their ability are suitable for identical instruction; that brings the lesson down to \$10 each. Even at that, daily lessons from de Reszke cost each pupil \$80 a week. The prices charged by other teachers run from 5 francs to \$5 a half hour and upward.

One of the most embarrassing questions a pupil with a really good voice can possibly ask an established singer is 'What teacher shall I go to?' 'I wouldn't think of that,' said an American who now holds a high place on the Parisian operatic stage. 'The teacher who might be extremely valuable to a pupil with a voice like mine might ruin any other voice, or the voice of a girl with a different temperament. I have told many American girls not to come here until they were thoroughly grounded in voice culture. I am now adding this. Don't think of coming to Paris until you know enough about your own voice and about the methods of teachers to select your own teacher wisely. And, as a rule, don't select for a teacher one who has been a singer and is now teaching. There are exceptions, but generally it is positively impossible for one who can sing and has sung to tell any one else how to do it.' (Copyright, 1907, by Dexter Marshall.)

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## Maria's Midnight Lecture.

LECTURE NO. 7.

"Course I'm sorry you don't feel well, Job, but I warned you about going out to the ball game to see Johnson pitch, without putting on your flannel undershirt. I know you were asleep all this afternoon, and I noticed you ate all that dinner brought up to you, so I think you must be feeling some better. Your brain hurts? You mean your head, don't you, Job—you can be certain you've got a head, but you ain't so sure about the other thing!"

"After I got the dishes done and scrubbed the kitchen floor and put the children to bed and darned some clean socks for you and mended a nice waist for little Haley and my petticoat for little Emily, I just sat down and went over the news of the week and thought, maybe, you'd like to talk things over a little before you went to sleep. I do so like to hear your views on things, you're so informing."

"I don't see that the British have so much to crow about, do you, just because the Bishop of London beat Mr. Roosevelt playing tennis. 'Course, I know that Mr. Roosevelt's our champion President, champion hay pitcher, champion coal stoker, champion nature writer, champion bear hunter, and all that, but I never heard that he held any tennis championship medals. No wonder a bishop can play lawn tennis with his own sleeves, and of course, she says, several important roles, including 'Lohengrin' and 'Nedda' in 'I Pagliacci.' She was slated to sing Elizabeth in 'Tannhauser,' but for some reason did not do so. She expects to sign a contract with the new management of the opera."

Marguerita Sylva's engagement by the Opera Comique was a simpler matter even than Jane Norla's. Although not an English girl, she made a contract at nineteen to sing for Sir Augustus Harris in London at Covent Garden and Drury Lane. Twenty days later she had sailed, and she went to the States with Beecham Tree as a member of his dramatic company some ten or a dozen years ago. True, he thought he could make an emotional actress of her, but her accent was against her, and at first she had to be content with doing the musical numbers in such diverse plays as 'Hamlet' and 'Trilby.' Later she became a comic opera star, and remained in America until she was married to Francis Wilson when he revived 'Carmen.' She expects to return to America by and by, but not for a year or two at least. 'Carmen' has been one of her favorite parts at the Opera Comique, Santuzzo in 'Cavalleria Rusticana' another.

Several of the teachers who were famous ten or a dozen years ago are now dead and gone, while some of those who survive are well along in years. Vanucci is seventy. Mme. Marchesi is eighty past, Shriella is between eighty and ninety. But they are all still teaching many pupils. Their prices when at their best were more reasonable than the prices now exacted by some of the New York teachers who have transferred their activities from the American metropolis, with its alleged lack of 'atmosphere,' to the French metropolis, which is full of it.

Jean de Reszke, who is so big a man in the musical world that he cannot well be advertised, asks and gets \$40 an hour, but he will teach four pupils for that price all together as readily as one, providing the progress, their voices, and their ability are suitable for identical instruction; that brings the lesson down to \$10 each. Even at that, daily lessons from de Reszke cost each pupil \$80 a week. The prices charged by other teachers run from 5 francs to \$5 a half hour and upward.

One of the most embarrassing questions a pupil with a really good voice can possibly ask an established singer is 'What teacher shall I go to?' 'I wouldn't think of that,' said an American who now holds a high place on the Parisian operatic stage. 'The teacher who might be extremely valuable to a pupil with a voice like mine might ruin any other voice, or the voice of a girl with a different temperament. I have told many American girls not to come here until they were thoroughly grounded in voice culture. I am now adding this. Don't think of coming to Paris until you know enough about your own voice and about the methods of teachers to select your own teacher wisely. And, as a rule, don't select for a teacher one who has been a singer and is now teaching. There are exceptions, but generally it is positively impossible for one who can sing and has sung to tell any one else how to do it.'

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**LIPTON'S CUP CHALLENGE.**

**A Defense of the New York Yacht Club's Declination.**

From the New York Times.

Sir Thomas professes even more grief than surprise that his challenge has been declined. He has no excuse whatever for either emotion, and his yearning to race with more "wholesome" boats than those which would have been quite wholesome enough for him if they had only been fast enough to "lift the cup" can be satisfied as soon as he chooses to send some of those more wholesome boats over here. One might imagine from his lamentations that the action of the yacht club barred him from American waters. It does nothing of the kind; it only cuts off his unreasonable hope of competing for the America's Cup on terms which would deprive that trophy of all except its bullion value. There are other cups with more excitement about them than the cups should mean, and he says such with exactly the sort of boat he and his designers want to build—can, that is, if he and they can build better boats of that sort than we can make.

We are able to assure him that if he wants to race a 55-foot boat constructed in accordance with the new rules, he has only to send a challenge to that effect and it will be accepted as soon as a cable dispatch can be put on the wire. He might, indeed, find himself embarrassed by the number as well as the promptness of the acceptances, for there are six men ready to order boats of the kind he describes and to bring him with many races as he desires for a cup which, while it would not give as much or as valuable renown as the America's Cup, fairly would confer, would still be very well worth winning.

**Bryan Against the Field.**

From the Little Rock Gazette.

Who besides Bryan has developed great strength? Certainly not Folk, though there has been energetic effort in his behalf; nor Hearst, for whom no campaigning is being done; nor Chandler, whose "boom" has vanished; nor Gray, of Delaware, who has been much discussed; nor Johnson, of Minnesota, the reputed dark horse favored by Henry Watrous; nor Daniel, of Virginia. The one man whose valiantness has been and still is widely talked of, and who is regarded as a tower